

WASHINGTON - U.S. Reps. Harry Mitchell, Ed Pastor, Gabrielle Giffords, and Raul Grijalva today released the following statement regarding health insurance reform and Arizona's Medicaid costs.

"When the United States Senate passed a health insurance reform bill in December that punished Arizona for having a strong and successful Medicaid program we worked together to ensure that the special deals put in place by the Senate, like the 'Cornhusker Kickback' were stripped and changes were made that will help reduce Arizona's Medicaid costs. We were successful in our efforts and the reconciliation bill passed by the House will ensure Arizona is treated fairly and equitably for its Medicaid program. The changes we fought to put in the bill will provide \$2.5 billion in new Medicaid funding for Arizona.

"We came to our individual decisions to support health insurance reform in the wake of the Governor and state legislature's move to kick close to 400,000 Arizonans, including 40,000 children, off their health insurance. The state's decision to slash Medicaid and KidsCare, which puts Arizona at risk to lose billions in federal matching funds and kill over 42,000 jobs was an important consideration in our decision to vote for health insurance reform legislation. Claims by the Governor and her legislative allies that this bill would cost \$1 billion or more to Arizona are hyperbolic and completely unfounded. They are thinly veiled attempts to divert attention from their misplaced priorities and poor judgment that will keep families from receiving the health care they desperately need - a plan that will dig the state into a deeper budget hole by jeopardizing \$7 billion in federal funds. These are funds that were paid by Arizona taxpayers and they should not be forfeited because of the ill conceived decisions made by the legislature and the Governor.

"The suggestion that somehow this bill is responsible for Arizona's budget crisis is absurd. The state of Arizona had a budget crisis before the health insurance reform bill and would still be mired in one without it. In fact, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, otherwise known as the Stimulus bill, which we supported has already provided Arizona with \$1.2 billion in extra Medicaid funds with another billion on its way. We are currently working to extend this increased funding. While we understand that the Governor and the state legislature have a difficult economic environment to contend with, we think they should focus on finding sensible solutions that benefit, not hurt, Arizonans, instead of playing politics and blaming others for their decisions."